



"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."
- Arthur Ashe

Administrators' Message

Good Morning Parents, Guardians, Case Managers and School Partners,

On behalf of the entire Lamberts Mill Academy school community, we warmly welcome you to the start of a new school year. To our returning families, it is a pleasure to see you again and to continue the important work we began together. To our new students and families, we are excited for you to join our school community, and we look forward to partnering with you in your educational and therapeutic journey.



This year marks an exciting time for Lamberts Mill Academy as we continue to grow and strengthen the supports we provide to our students. We are thrilled to welcome several new staff members, both academically and clinically, whose expertise, dedication, and enthusiasm will enrich the school experience of our students. Their presence will allow us to expand our instructional and therapeutic offerings, ensuring every student has the support needed to succeed.

We are also proud to introduce a new therapeutic initiative that reflects our commitment to supporting the mental health well-being of all LMA students. This year, we have developed a dedicated group therapy room, designed as a safe and supportive space where students can participate in structured group sessions focused on social-emotional growth, peer connection, and resilience-building. We believe this initiative will only strengthen our daily group therapy sessions and complement our academic program by fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and collaboration among students.

At Lamberts Mill Academy, our mission is to provide a safe, supportive, and challenging environment where students can thrive both academically and personally. We recognize that success comes not only from classroom learning but also from building strong relationships and learning the skills needed to navigate life's challenges. With the partnership of parents, guardians, and case managers, and the dedication of our talented staff, we know this year will be one of growth and achievement for all of our students.

We are excited for the year ahead and grateful for the trust you place in us. Together, let us make this school year a meaningful, productive, and rewarding experience for every student at Lamberts Mill Academy. If you have any questions, concerns or general interests please reach out!

With warm regards,

Reed Leibfried
Principal

John Lopreiato
Supervisor of Instruction

Monthly Data

1. Enrollment - 44
2. Acceptances - 0
3. New Students - 6
4. Intakes - 2
5. Referrals - 5
6. Disenrollments - 0
7. Fire Drill - 9/9/25
8. Other Drill (EM Drill: Lockdown) - 9/16/25

Upcoming Events

October 2025 Important Dates

October 2 - School Closed

October 13 - Early Dismissal for Students, Professional Development for Staff
 October 31 - Halloween Party & Scary Story Contest



UCESC 2025-2026 School Calendar

Union County Educational Services Commission

September '25						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October '25						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November '25						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December '25						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January '26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

2025-2026

District Calendar

Sep 1	Labor Day
Sep 2 - 4	Staff Development Day
Sep 5	School Opens (Students & Staff)
Sep 23 - 24	Rosh Hashanah
Oct 2	Yom Kippur
Oct 13	Early Dismissal (1pm)/Staff Development
Nov 6 - 7	NJEA Convention
Nov 26	Early Dismissal (1pm)
Nov 27 - 28	Thanksgiving
Dec 23	Early Dismissal (1pm)
Dec 24 - Jan 2	Winter Recess
Jan 12	Early Dismissal (1pm)/Staff Development
Jan 19	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Feb 16	President's Day
Mar 6	Staff Development Day
Apr 3 - 10	Spring Recess
May 11	Early Dismissal (1pm)/Staff Development
May 25	Memorial Day
Jun 19 - 23	Early Dismissal (1pm)
Jun 23	Last Day of School

Total Days for Students: 180**
 Total Days for Staff: 184**

**Three emergency days are built into the calendar.
 Should extra days be needed they will be added at the end of the year.

If all emergency days are not used,
 the days will be reduced at the end of the year.

February '26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

March '26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April '26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May '26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June '26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Emergency Closing Information	
<input type="checkbox"/> First Day of School - Students	In the event of a delayed opening, all UCESC Schools and Programs will be delayed by 90 minutes.
<input type="checkbox"/> School Closed - Holiday	
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Dismissal	
<input type="checkbox"/> School Closed - Staff Development	Delayed opening, early dismissal and school closing announcements will be posted online at www.ucesc.org and sent via the First Alert system.

Staff Spotlight - Registered Behavior Technicians, Mr. Soto & Mr. McParland

Changing of the RBT Guard

LMA students and staff would like to thank Mr. Soto for all of his hard work, dedication, and support provided during his time as the Registered Behavior Technician or RBT. Mr. Soto started as the RBT three years ago and became an integral part of the LMA by assisting classroom teachers with managing student behavior and taking charge of the LMA Point System. Mr. Soto created



meaningful and impactful relationships with both students and staff. One student said, "Mr. Soto you will be missed. Thank you for being there for me every step of the way. You always had positive energy!" Mr. Soto will be missed by all and we wish him good luck on his future endeavors.

Taking up the role of RBT at LMA is Mr. McParland. Mr. McParland joins us from Westlake School where he worked as a Teacher Assistant and RBT for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other multiple disabilities. We are excited to welcome Mr. McParland to LMA!

LMA Student of the Month - Nathan

LMA is proud to announce our September student of the month, Nathan! Nathan has been a great addition to our LMA student body. He has been an active learner in our school community by participating in class discussion and engaging in classroom activities. Nathan has also shown a great deal of progress in reaching his goals. He embraced the LMA school community and is known for his kindness and friendliness. By displaying a welcoming attitude, a great sense of humor, and progress, Nathan has won student of the month!



September at The Mill

Voting Registration Presentation

Ms. Floroff and Ms. York hosted an assembly on the importance of voting with the upperclassmen. The presentation covered how voting is a way of making your voice heard and how you can use your vote to effect change. Students learned about the voting process and were then able to register to vote.



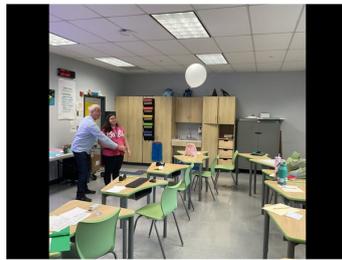
Red Ribbon Day Poster Contest

Middle School students participated in the annual Red Ribbon Day Poster Contest. The theme of the posters was "What's My Anti-Drug" and students created posters describing what they choose to do instead of drugs. A link to Red Ribbon Day activities can be found at the end of the newsletter!





Adding new rocks to the Zen Zone



Science Experiments with Mr. Lund



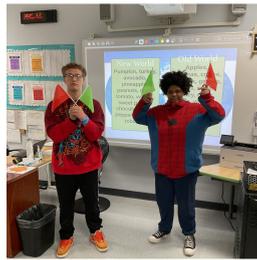
Foil Boat Challenge in Coding Class

Classroom Spotlights



Music

Music students have been busy this September. They kicked off the year listening to various selections from students and staff selected songs from the summer playlist. Discussion about these songs included how the songs made them feel, using regular vocabulary and The Zones of Regulations. They then examined lyrics and compared them to the tone of the song. Students then created their own Autumn Playlists to continue this classroom activity throughout the year. Students then moved on to listening to a podcast, “How AI is Changing the Music Business”, which led to insightful conversations about their experiences and perceptions of AI, and how it compares to what is currently happening in music.



Social Studies

Middle School Social Studies students started their unit on Colonial America by creating posters about the different aspects of life in the colonies. Students read about jobs, foods, clothing, and daily activities and compared and contrasted life in New England with the Middle and Southern colonies. World History students have been learning about Geography and the importance of knowing where places are in the world. Students learned about different land forms and created 3-D cubes about different land and sea forms. US I History students have been learning about the Age of Exploration and the impact of sharing and trading of ideas, cultures, food, and diseases had on society. Students



Physical Education & Health

Students at Lambert’s Mill Academy have been off to a great start this school year! We kicked things off in Physical Education with our Fitness Unit, where students participated in a fun and engaging activity called Fitness Monopoly. Just like the classic board game, students rolled dice to move around the “board,” completing exercises at each stop. Activities included yoga, Pilates, cardiovascular exercises, strength training, and stretching. The corner spaces were designated as “hot spots” and featured special exercises using equipment such as scooters, rowing machines, and stationary bikes. Students loved the variety and embraced the challenges, making the

participated in an activity that involved separating ideas, cultures, food, and diseases into their places of origin, the New World or the Old World. Students used two different color flags to represent their choice and counted how many they got right at the end. US II History students started learning about the Industrial Revolution and the impact of early 20th Century inventions on modern society. Students then created their own inventions to solve a modern day problem. Students used their creativity to come up with new apps, gadgets, and systems to help today's people. Social Studies students had a great start to the new school year and we are excited for the rest of the year!

activity both enjoyable and effective. In Health class, we began by reviewing the course syllabus and classroom expectations for the year. Students are currently working on Unit 1: Health and Wellness, where we are exploring topics like the health triangle, health risks and behaviors, and strategies for promoting overall wellness. It's been a fantastic start, and we're looking forward to a productive and healthy year ahead!

Student Council

Elections for Student Council have been off to an amazing start! There's been quite a buzz in the LMA hallways for candidates running for open positions. For President and Vice-President, students had to write a statement as to why they wanted to be in that position and encourage their school community to vote for them. Voting will be taking place at the end of the month and students are eager to get started in their new positions with Emma as President, Jasson as Vice President, Amy as Secretary, Evette as Treasurer, and Iris as Historian. Congratulations to the winners!

Clinical Corner

This month, we are focusing on two core skills: Self-Awareness and Self-Management. Self-Awareness is about understanding your own emotions and thoughts and Self-Management is using that understanding to regulate behavior and achieve your goals.

Group Therapy

The students at LMA kicked off September with an exciting return to the school building. Students are beginning to acclimate to the LMA program, getting to know new students, and beginning to establish group norms and cohesiveness. They eagerly engaged in their group therapy with ice breakers and getting to know their peers within their groups. The students were encouraged to identify short and long term goals that will be revisited over the next few months to see if these goals have been met.



The most exciting part about group therapy and the newest addition is that LMA now has a new home space for our LMA Group room! The team has worked hard to create a quiet, safe and nurturing environment that the students look forward to joining on a daily basis. Whether it's for group therapy or seeking a calming space, the students appear to love it and are enjoying having a safe space to express how they feel while being with peers.

Here is what some of our students had to say about our new Group Room:

"The new group room is very easy on the the eyes, it puts you in a calmer state"--Amy

"I love the new group room. It's fun and quiet, and very peaceful"-- Iris

"I like how relaxed and quiet the group room is. I like how spacious it is and it makes me feel so comfortable like home!"--Ma'Kiah

"The new group room is AWESOME! It's cozy in there, nice and well decorated and we don't have to worry or argue about where to go for group."--Brynne

Behavior Team Update

Supporting Success Through Structure, Understanding, and Individualized Support

Dear Lamberts Mill Academy Families,

Welcome to a new school year! We are excited to support your student in succeeding academically, socially, and emotionally this school year. Our Behavior Team plays a key role in building skills for emotional regulation, following rules, and reaching personal goals.

Who's on the Team?

- 2 Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs): Trained professionals who work directly with students to implement plans, collect data, and encourage engagement. At LMA, RBTs also run our Mentor Program with Westlake School, fostering peer connections.
- Supervisor of Behavior (BCBA): A master's-level Board Certified Behavior Analyst who designs and oversees individualized behavior plans, analyzes data, and ensures ethical, effective supports.

What We Do

We use data-driven, positive behavior supports—including our Schoolwide Points System—to reinforce effort, schoolwide rule followings, and positive social skills. Points and progress are

tracked to tailor support. RBTs often use a push-in model, working alongside students in class to provide immediate help without disrupting learning.

👤 Behavior Team Key Terms

- **BCBA:** Designs and supervises behavior plans.
- **RBT:** Implements plans and collects data.
- **ABC (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence):** A tool for understanding why behaviors happen.
- **Reinforcement:** Encourages a behavior to occur again.
- **FBA/BIP:** Processes and plans to address challenging behavior and teach new skills.

🤝 Partnering with Families

We know behavior impacts every part of life. We are happy to share progress, provide at-home strategies, and work with you to create consistency between school and home.

If you have questions about your child's supports, the Mentor Program, or our positive behavior system, please contact us. Together, we can support your student's success.

With Appreciation,

The Lamberts Mill Academy Behavior Team

Upcoming Community Events

Community Resources

<https://naminj.org/>

<https://988lifeline.org/>

<https://nj4s.nj.gov/s/>

School in the Community

1. Monthly Community Meetings celebrating student awards
2. Mentoring at Westlake School
3. LMA Recycling Initiative with Westfield Conservation Center
4. Creature Comforts Pet Therapy

About Us

Contact Information:

Phone: (908)-233-7581

Address: 1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, 07090

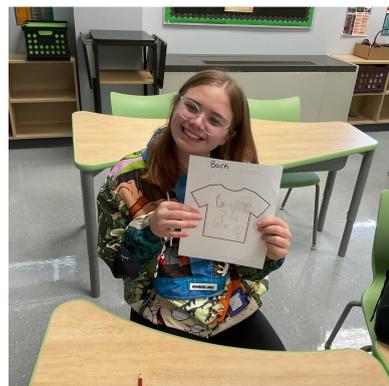
Website: https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts_mill_academy

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_lma/?hl=en

Lamberts Mill Academy is a school within the Union County Educational Services Commission. We are an out of district public school for students with psychiatric disabilities. We continue to partner with RWJ Trinitas Regional Medical Center to provide clinical services for our students. Our school community prides itself on our relationships with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, families and community partnerships. Being a public school, we adhere to all NJDOE assessment and curriculum mandates. Our professional learning community strives to increase student achievement and improve classroom instruction to provide students with the most effective educational, social and emotional learning environment possible.

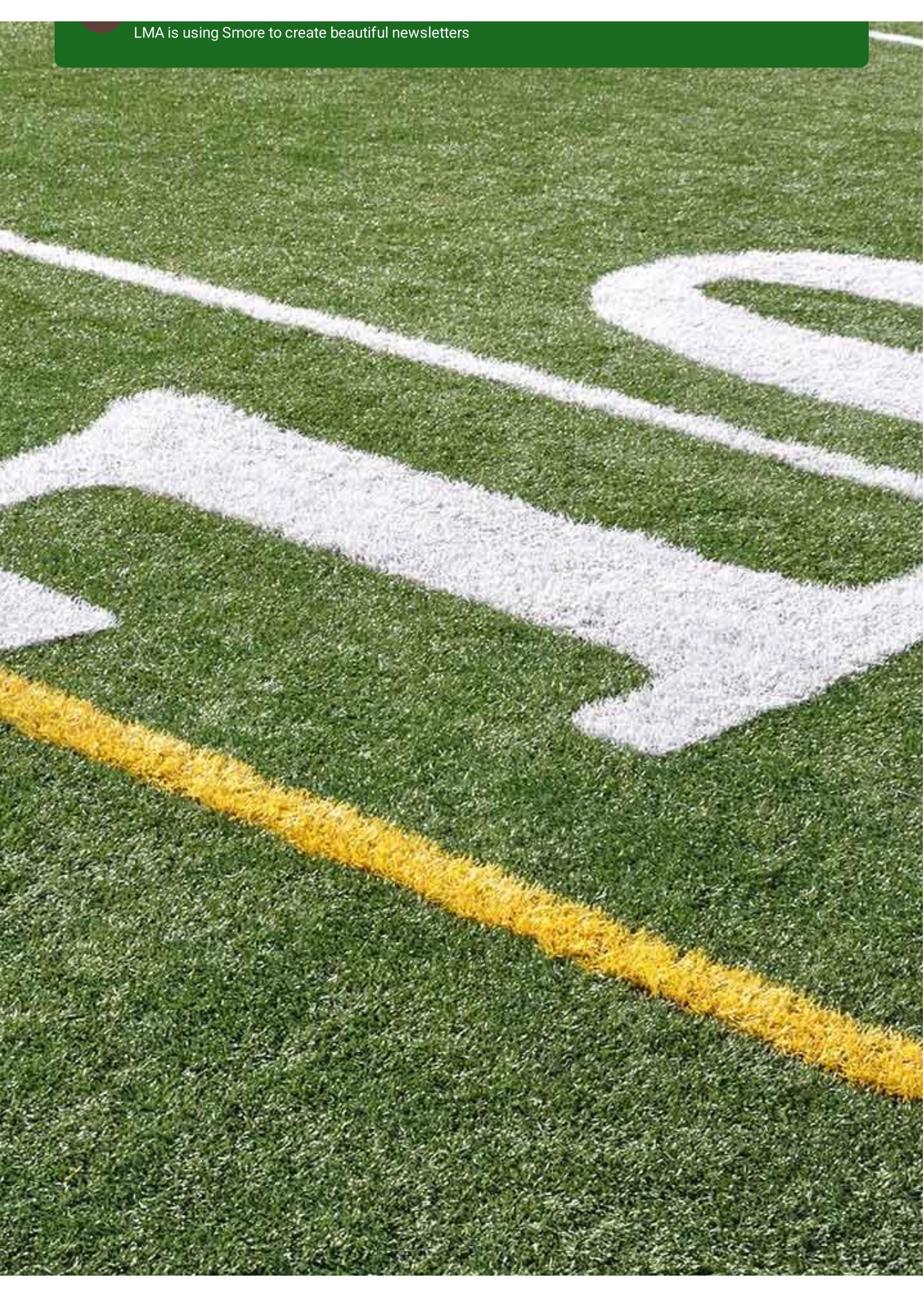


Creature Comfort Pet Therapy



Entry for the UCESC Tee Shirt Contest







SEPTEMBER



NEWSLETTER 25-26

September 2025 Monthly Report Enrollment Data

Enrollment-81 as of 9/24/25.

New Students-31.

Disenrollments-Two transitioned back to their Elizabeth Academy.

Emergency Drill-Lockdown 9/16/25.

Fire Drill-9/9/25.

A Message From The Principal: Dr. Balsamello

We would like to welcome everyone back to the 2025-2026 school year! We are so happy to see our returning and new students. This year we continue to implement our five year strategic plans while infusing restorative principles throughout our day. Please enjoy HAS's September newsletter!



September Important Dates

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	LABOR DAY 1	FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR FACULTY/STAFF 2	3	4	FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS 5	6
7	NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION WEEK 8	9	10	SPIRIT DAY - WEAR RED/WHITE/BLUE FOR 9/11 11	SPIRIT DAY - SCHOOL SPIRIT 12	13
14	15	16	17	18	SPIRIT DAY - FALL COLORS 19	20
21	FIRST DAY OF FALL 22	NO SCHOOL - ROSH HASHANA 23	NO SCHOOL - ROSH HASHANA 24	25	MOVIE/SPIRIT DAY - HISPANIC HERITAGE 26	27
28	29	30				

Student of the Month!

Congratulations Rosemary!

HAS's September student of the month is an individual who consistently demonstrates a combination of strong character, dedicated effort, and a positive impact on our school community. While academic achievement is part of her repertoire, this recognition goes beyond just getting good grades. It honors students who show remarkable perseverance, approaching challenges with a resilient attitude, and a commitment to learning. They are known for their kindness and respect, treating peers and staff with empathy and understanding, and often serving as a helpful friend or mentor to others.



This student is a quiet leader and a role model whose positive attitude and integrity make the classroom and HAS a better and more inclusive place for everyone. Rose embodies the values of HAS and truly shines as an example for peers. Congratulations Rosemary on a job well done!

Faculty/Staff "Getting to Know You"!

Mrs Rubin's Favorites:

Favorite movie: Grease

Favorite food: Pizza

Favorite color: Pink

Favorite book: Small Great Things by Jodi Picoult

Favorite travel spot: Steamboat Springs, Co (skiing)

Favorite activities: knitting, yoga, hikes, and spending time with her family



New to the HAS Family!



Ms Amanda Santiago - Science Teacher

Ms Santiago is our new science teacher that will be teaching Environmental and Computer Science. She used to work in the science field but decided to transition over to education and never looked back! Some interesting facts about Ms Santiago:

- she loves music and plays in a band.
- she plays a bunch of games, but mostly magic the gathering!



Mr Victor Solano - RBT

Mr Solano is our new Registered Behavior Technician. He is not new to UCESC as he did work at Hillcrest North last year and prior to that had was at Crossroads for two years.

Some interesting facts:

- he is a marine corps veteran and served from 2016-2020.
- he loves pit bulls and has two dogs that are pit bull mix.

- she is a huge fan of Pokemon and collects cards and physical games.
- she loves running and is currently training to run her first half marathon.
- she is a big fan of roller coasters and will travel the country just to ride the newest ones!



Ms Summer Zamel - Guidance Counselor

Ms Zamel is the new school counselor for both HAS and HAN. While she was finishing her masters for school counseling, she worked as a third grade teacher assistant in Jersey City. Ms Zamel did her internship hours at Hoboken High School. Some interesting facts:

- she is a first generation college student
- she is bilingual
- she has a kitten named Milo
- her favorite food is sushi
- she enjoys boxing.



- he is the oldest out of 5 siblings.
- he enjoys working out and playing video games on his off time.
- favorite football team is the Eagles.



Dr Tiara Lockett - SAC

Dr Lockett is the new Student Assistant Coordinator for HAS, HAN, and Lamberts Mill Academy. She brings extensive experience as an educator in public schools, having served in multiple impactful roles including Student Assistant Counselor, School Counselor, School Counseling Director, District-Level Attendance Coordinator, and Behaviorist. Throughout her career, she has supported student success by implementing school discipline strategies and developing programs that promote academic, emotional, and behavioral growth. Some interesting facts:

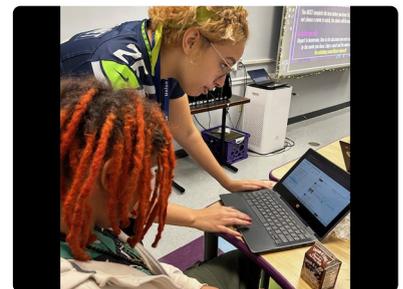
- she genuinely enjoys working with students and families, it is where she finds purpose and connection.
- she believes life is about service and is committed to giving back!

- she loves retail therapy!
Yes, it's a real thing and works for her 😊.
- when she starts with you, she will see you through to the finish line; commitment is at the core of how she works.
- she has an uncontrollable sweet tooth!

Teacher's Corner: Science

Ms Santiago's Computer Science/Environmental Science

In **Computer Science** class, students are exploring the foundational role of algorithms in programming and how they contribute to efficient problem-solving. They are also learning how to use flowcharts as visual tools to represent the logical structure of programs, particularly for modeling decision-making processes such as yes-or-no (binary) choices.



In **Environmental Science**, students are studying the value of interdisciplinary collaboration in scientific research. They are examining how integrating knowledge from various scientific fields leads to more comprehensive and informed decision-making when addressing complex environmental challenges.



Mrs Arora's Biology/Forensic Science

Biology:

On the very first day of biology class, students did an icebreaker experiment involving secret messages. In this experiment, only the writer and the receiver knew how to read the messages. After that, they began learning about the characteristics of living beings, such as reproduction, homeostasis, growth, and development. They also explored how cells were discovered and studied the detailed



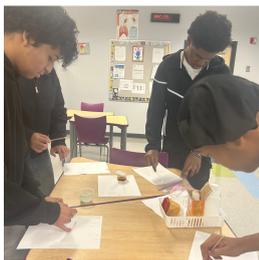
structures of cells. Students learned how plant cells differ from animal and bacterial cells. They drew diagrams, observed various models, and were excited to create their own unique cell models using their creativity.

Forensic Science:

In forensic science, students are developing their observation skills. They observe pictures for 60 seconds and then answer questions based on what they saw. They also solved two murder mysteries using these skills. Through this, they're learning how crimes can be staged, just like in crime shows, where people act as if they don't know what's going on.

General Science:

In general science class, students explore new science concepts every other day, such as surface tension, the law of inertia, and the biosphere. Each concept is paired with a hands-on activity. For example, they broke water molecules to explain surface tension, they created a biosphere inside a soda bottle and took readings every two weeks. While learning the law of inertia, they also uncovered the science behind the "magic tricks" performed by magicians.



New Student Orientation

HAS' New Student Orientation is an event designed to help incoming students transition smoothly into their new academic and social environment. This event took place in August and two times in September, aiming to reduce anxiety and set students up for a successful year. The primary purpose of the orientation is to provide students with the tools and information they need to succeed. First, students started off in the cafeteria where Dr Balsamello gave a presentation. Students were able to meet some of the teachers and staff as they were filling out the necessary paperwork to help their start off the school year smoothly. Then, when all was finished, students and parents were toured around the school to help the students feel at home!



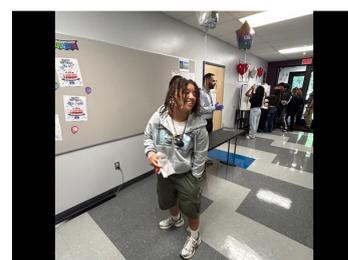
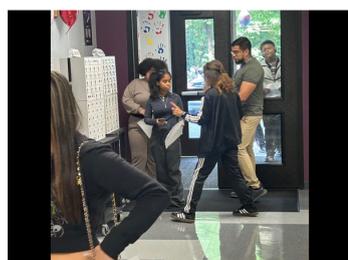
Back To School

The first day back at HAS had a unique blend of nervous energy and renewed purpose. For the students, the hallways are a whirlwind of reunions and first impressions. There's the low hum of excited chatter as friends embrace after months apart, and the quiet shuffling of new students trying to decipher their schedules and find their bearings. Every locker slam and every burst of laughter marks the return of a familiar rhythm, a collective sense of a fresh start.



Meanwhile, the teachers of HAS stand at their classroom doors, offering a warm and calming presence amidst the chaos. From Mr Barone and Mrs Ferrari whose classrooms are the first the students encounter to Mrs Wrzesinski and Mrs Lobosco who are at opposite ends of the school then Mrs Fern and Ms Pradel handing out breakfasts, Ms Vlastaras handing out schedules, and all of the teachers in between. Their classrooms are meticulously prepared with bulletin boards decorated, desks neatly aligned, and an activity ready to go. They greet each student with a friendly smile, a silent promise of guidance and a new beginning. While they are a mix of veteran calm and first-day jitters themselves, their focus is on setting a positive tone and building a community, ready to usher a new group of learners through the academic year.

Finally, the staff act as the school's backbone, ensuring the day unfolds without a hitch. Principal Dr Balsamello, school social worker Ms Gilchrist, and administrative assistant Mrs Demillio patrol the halls with a reassuring presence as they answer questions and direct traffic. Security monitor Mr DiOrio, academic supervisor Mr Van Cleef, and school nurse Mrs Rubin keep the flow of traffic while keeping our school safe. Even the custodians work diligently behind the scenes, making sure the floors are polished and the building is ready to welcome its temporary inhabitants. Together, these groups create a vibrant ecosystem of energy and order, all contributing to the collective excitement of a new school year.





"Paving Paths" Teacher Recognitions

September - Determine Your Path



Ms Pradel



Mrs Lobosco



Mrs Arora

HAS Students' Voices on Paving Paths: One UCESC Voice At A Time

Students writing about "Paving Paths: One UCESC Voice At A Time" can be a powerful exercise, allowing them to explore themes of individuality, collective action, and social change. So, as a part of the UCESC theme this year, students in Mrs Fern's classes are voicing their thoughts each month on Paving Paths: One UCESC Voice At A Time!

September - What does it mean to "Determine Your Path"?

- What I feel like it means to "determine your path" is to go with what you feel and think, and figure out the route you want to go with your life. Whether it's for life or the time being, determining your path is always about YOU and what you want to do with yourself. Other peoples paths are different, but it's all about what you decide to do with your path. Determining your path can mean all different things, what you want to do with your career, future, school and etc. - JP
- To determine my path is to learn much more things and understanding. To always make the right choices and understand the right path of choices. Always having your mind on something important and not on bad choices. My path is to make right choices and to make sure to learn something important to further my future and to achieve the goals I always dreamed of. When

going to the right path, this can also help me find a good job, earn money, and at strengthen my brain. - JMO

- I think determining your path is deciding where you want to go in life emotionally, mentally, and physically. This could even include determining where you would want your career to go. To determine your path you have to know what exactly you want and how you want it and how it should be. This means not listening to peoples pre determined paths and ideas. - IT
- I think the phrase "Determine your path" means to chose how you will live your life. To me, "Determining your path" means to be determined of my path for the school year. The path I want to take is to graduate on time with everyone else. My path is to not have any absences until the end of school or maintaining a minimum of one or two until the end of the year. like my parents have told me to make the right choices in life so I don't go down the wrong path following the crowd, and to be my own person; a leader. - KA
- I would like to determine how I'm going to be in the future, how to prepare myself, and what is going to happen to me when I graduate high school; facing the reality of going to college, getting a great job, and how life is going to be harder. I would like to graduate and make my parents proud and to get them a better life that they deserve, and solve their financial problems. I know I can do it, I just have to believe in myself and make so much effort. - MHM
- I want to be able to stay focused on the things I know I can achieve with no hand outs or a holding hand. I want to become the person that can be able to do anything that no one can. - EC
- To determine your path is like having a plan. Knowing what you want and will possibly follow. There are a lot of paths you could take depending on the subject in your life like school, family, career job and etc. It's figuring out what you want to do in your life. - DAR
- To determine your path, I think it's about finding out what you like to do as a person and doing what you love as a career. Determining your path can be challenging cause there can be multiple things you like to do, but what are you best at? Whatever your best at, it should be what determines your path. If you like doing something and are good at it why not make it your career? Most people just do what they need to in order to get by, but there's some that go to the furthest extent to really find their path. I feel like your "path" is your career or how you handle your lifestyle, you're the only one that can determine your path but are you willing to go that far? - CT
- For me, "determine your path" means finding what ever is lost. Maybe it is becoming a new version of your self; for this month, for the rest of the year, or for the rest of your life. Maybe the path that you are following now is not the same that you might be following in two years. To determine your path is not about setting things down is about changing for your own good and to let a new version of you born from your mistakes. - KB
- Determining your path means making decisions that will alter your future. Determining your path isn't only about making decisions, its about learning who you want to become on the way. You might not have it all figured out, you might not know where you want to go, or who you want to be, but that is the journey of determining your path. Finding out what you like, the kind

of people you enjoy being around, the places you like to go to, finding where you fit in, and making those kinds of decisions is all about determining your path. - AE

Student Circles

Restorative circles in a classroom are a proactive and responsive strategy for building community and addressing conflict. This month, Mr. Shandroff began going into the classrooms to cultivate these circles full time. When he meets with the students from a class, they share feelings, discuss topics relevant to their classroom community, and this will build positive relationships. This practice is meant to foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect. In the event of a conflict, a circle should provide a structured space for those involved to talk about what happened, who was affected, and what steps must be taken to rectify the situation in a positive manner. Mr. Shandroff utilizes a microphone as a talking piece to ensure one person speaks at a time, students are encouraged to listen with empathy and when needed, take responsibility for their actions. This approach shifts the focus from punishment to understanding and repairing any harm that may occur. It also teaches students valuable skills in communication, empathy, and conflict resolution that we hope will extend beyond the classroom. Student AD stated "I didn't think I would like it but I kinda did. I can see how it could help."



Westlake Cafe

As a reward for their dedication, students who maintained perfect attendance and completed beginning of the year requirements are celebrated with a special trip to The Westlake Cafe. This treat is a meaningful way for HAS to recognize the hard work, responsibility, and commitment of these students, acknowledging that showing up consistently and following procedure is the first step to success. It's a well-deserved break from the usual school routine. So many students were eligible that a third visit had to be added!



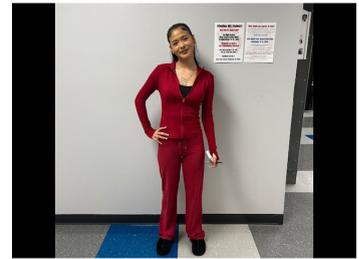
At the same time, this served a dual purpose as a warm and casual welcome to all new students. It's a low-pressure opportunity for newcomers to meet peers in a relaxed environment away from the classroom. The cafe setting, with its inviting atmosphere and refreshments, helps to break the ice and encourages conversation. This shared experience helps to foster a sense of belonging and

community from day one, showing our new students that they are a valued part of HAS and setting a positive tone for the rest of the year.

It's a simple yet effective way to both honor existing students and extend a hand of friendship to those just beginning their journey.

Spirit Days

Remembering 9/11 - Wear red, white, and blue



HAS School Spirit



Wear Fall Colors



Hispanic Heritage Month



Students Outside of School

Another Day, Another Destiny. (Les Miserables)

For the past two or three years, Diaisha has been a devoted fixture in Jefferson Academy's theatre department, fueled by an undeniable love for musicals. While she may dream of a lead role, she is a true theatre kid at heart, embracing every opportunity to be a part of the magic. Diaisha is a dependable and enthusiastic member of the ensemble, a role she's come to appreciate for its collaborative spirit and the joy of contributing to a powerful group performance.

For Diaisha, the stage is more than just a place to perform; it's where she feels a sense of purpose and genuine success. In a world where she thrives in art, but other subjects often feel like a struggle, theatre is a constant source of confidence. It's where Diaisha can finally feel like she's doing something right, where her hard work and passion translate into a tangible, joyful experience. The lights, the music, and the camaraderie of the cast all combine to create a space where she feels capable and valued, making every rehearsal and performance a true highlight of their life.



Blooper Pic of the Month

About Us

Hillcrest Academy South Campus is an alternative high school for students from the Elizabeth Public School District. Students are referred to HAS by their Elizabeth Academy guidance counselor and administration for an interview at HAS. We provide a small educational learning setting with opportunities to make up courses through our Credit Retrieval Program in a caring environment in order to meet Elizabeth's graduation requirements.

Website: www.ucesc.org

Instagram: [ucesc_has](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_has)

Facebook: [Hillcrest Academy South](https://www.facebook.com/HillcrestAcademySouth)

Location: [1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, USA-Door 3B](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1571+Lamberts+Mill+Road,+Westfield,+NJ,+USA-Door+3B)

Phone: [908-233-9317](tel:908-233-9317)

[Visit us on Instagram](#)



HAS Smore

HAS is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





Hillcrest North September 2025 MR

September 2025

Si usted desea leer "The Newsletter" en otra lengua que no sea inglés, hay un botón para traducir la página en la parte superior de la computadora (Translate). Le llevará a la siguiente página para que presione (Translated) y escoja la lengua en que usted desea leer.

Principal's Message



Dear Hillcrest Academy North Campus (HAN) Students and Graduates:

Welcome to a new school year at Hillcrest Academy North (HAN)! Whether you are returning or joining us for the first time, we are thrilled to have you as part of our community. At HAN, we recognize that every student has a unique path, and we are committed to helping each of our students reach their full potential—academically, personally, and beyond.

This year, we're launching several exciting initiatives designed to support growth, increase student engagement, and strengthen outcomes across the board. These changes come from listening to our students, staff, and families—and we believe they will make a real difference.

HAN is about possibilities, resilience, and second chances. It's about creating a place where students feel seen, supported, and empowered to thrive. With these new initiatives and your continued dedication, we are confident that this year will be one of our most impactful yet. Let's stay curious, courageous, and connected. Here's to a great year ahead!

Sincerely,

Mr. Marquet
Principal

Monthly Data

Enrolled -76

Accepted - 0

Disenrollment - 6

Drills: Emergency and Fire

Upcoming Dates

October 2- Yom Kippur - School Closed

October 13 - Early Dismissal for Students at 1PM

October 27-31 - Spirit Week

Attendance Matters!

HAN implemented one of our strategic initiatives this school year. We started the Attendance Matters! Program which is designed to address chronic absenteeism. We created incentives to encourage consistent attendance and a self-monitoring program to hold students accountable. Students who complete a full week of school have their names displayed on a "Shout-Out" wall and are served a "special" breakfast the following Monday by the Attendance Matters! Committee. Our staff spent a majority of our PLC time last school year surveying students, researching best practices, and designing a program that we feel will be effective for our student population. This program was outlined in detail by Dr. Marquet on the first day of school followed by discussion in student homerooms of the importance of being "present" at school both physically and mentally. Student response has been exciting to see as they have been empowered to make a change in their outlook on school.

After the first full two weeks of school, we have an attendance rate of 83%, our highest in years and 21% higher than last years' average. Students were able to have chocolate chip pancakes and French toast casserole for the first two Mondays of school.



Student Stories

Have you ever felt hopeless, or as though you could never change? Well so have I and yet the person I was last year wouldn't be able to recognize who I have become now. This year at Hillcrest I often find myself looking back and realizing how much I've grown since the last school year. Last year I've roamed the halls in fear worrying about what everyone thought of me. I struggled with motivating myself to attend school daily, questioned my choice of clothing, and hid my voice. Now I walk with my head held high and have redirected my focus to my studies instead of the opinion of others; I have maintained perfect attendance, wear whatever I feel pleases me, and push myself outside of my comfort zone by striking up random conversations with new people. The teachers and staff at Hillcrest have been of of my main support systems and reasons I have been able to make such a significant change. Their kindness and support has helped me view myself and the world around me in a brighter light, so I will forever be grateful for all they have done and continue to do for me.

- Aileen

So far being at Hillcrest has been really fun. The classes are peaceful and the teachers are very attentive and very open to help. I've never been to a school where I like all my teachers. They are all so nice and actually care about our future. My favorite class has to be Ms. Killeen's. I love the variety of books and the fun things we can do after we complete our work. Overall, I've really enjoyed my time here so far, and I can't wait to keep making memories and graduating.

- Harper

As a student coming from large public schools, this is the right school for me. I'm able to pay attention and do my work due to how small it is. I thought classes would be boring, but if anything, it's better. They are quiet and the teachers help a lot. I've really liked getting to know everyone.

- Janerylis

In The Classroom

Spanish Class

This month students in Spanish class have been getting experience by researching "El Mes de la Herencia Hispana" celebrating Self-Awareness and Hispanic Heritage Month, and working on finding Latinos who made big contributions in the United States who have hispanic descendants, like Celia Cruz, Tito Fuentes, Mark Anthony and others along with using different Spanish vocabulary to write stories about their findings. The Hispanic Heritage Month project will be shared around the school on Thursday, October 16th with a day that highlights the cultural diversity of our Spanish community through music, dance, art, storytelling, research and more.

In addition, the students took a Pre-assessment about the "**Personal identity/ School life**" unit to measure what students know and what they need to accomplish at the end of the unit to enhance their learning. Students are learning how to practice vocabulary, listening, reading and writing along with all the different pronunciations associated with them. While students are practicing vocabulary, having them work on reading and writing has shown them how creative they can be on their stories. Finally, in the area of social emotional learning, students have been exploring the reading and writing process working on sentence structure about different Spanish countries in Spanish, using the "Que tal" magazines.

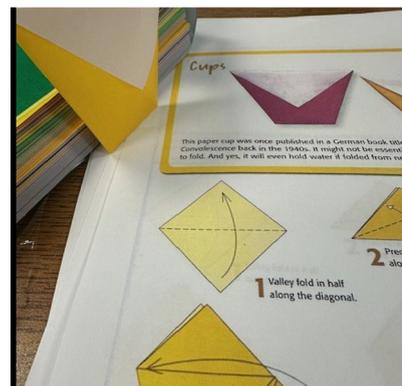




Computer Science Class

Computer science classes are spending a few minutes every day with origami. I planned the paper folding activity as a fun way to emphasize the importance of following instructions in a specific order - just what we program computers to do. Beyond the fun and the challenge of following the instructions, I discovered that origami provides students with a hands-on way to explore important mathematical concepts while engaging creativity and problem-solving skills.

Through the process of folding the models, students develop spatial reasoning, visualize abstract concepts like fractions and symmetry, and practice precision and perseverance. It encourages students to make sense of problems, reason quantitatively, and explain their reasoning. Folding paper models real-world mathematics, requires strategic use of tools, and reinforces the importance of accuracy. Students discover geometric structures and notice repeated patterns and relationships. Overall, origami enriches the computer science curriculum by connecting art and computer programming in a meaningful, accessible way. And sometimes we make a cute jumping frog or paper cup along the way!



Former Students at UCESC

Life after HAN



HAN graduates of 2025 are in the House!!! Alex Melara and John Salenas have joined the UCESC staff as Teaching Assistants. Alex is at Crossroads, and John is at Westlake. Alex worked at Crossroads over the summer after going on a field trip with Ms. Silva's class to the school. She fell in love with the students there after having the opportunity to read to both the elementary and middle school students. This led her to want to join the summer ESY program and study education. She loved it so much she became a Teaching Assistant. John heard about Alex's experience

with the ESY program. He spoke to Mr. Mojovich about how to become a TA while Mr. Mojovich was working during the ESY program. John applied, got an interview, and was offered the job to start the school year. We are so proud of all our HAN graduates, but it was such a delight to see these two at the beginning of the year orientation!

STOPit Solutions

Students and staff were introduced to STOPit Solutions, a program that allows students and staff to report any concerns about unsafe, harmful, or inappropriate behavior to the HAN Safety Team.

Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to download the STOPit App onto their phones.



About HAN



Hillcrest Academy North assists students from the Elizabeth Public School District in reaching their full potential by providing an alternative to the traditional high school setting. We offer smaller class sizes with a rigorous and challenging high school curriculum that is aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and prepares students for college and career. Our goal is to provide a safe, supportive, and empowering school

environment that fosters lifelong learning, mutual respect, creativity, and the joy of learning, with an effective, caring, innovative staff, in partnership with home and the community.

Mr. John Marquet, Principal

Mr. Thomas Van Cleef, Supervisor of Instruction

Location: [2630 Plainfield Ave, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076](https://www.ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

Website: https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north

Visit Us On Instagram



Mission Statement

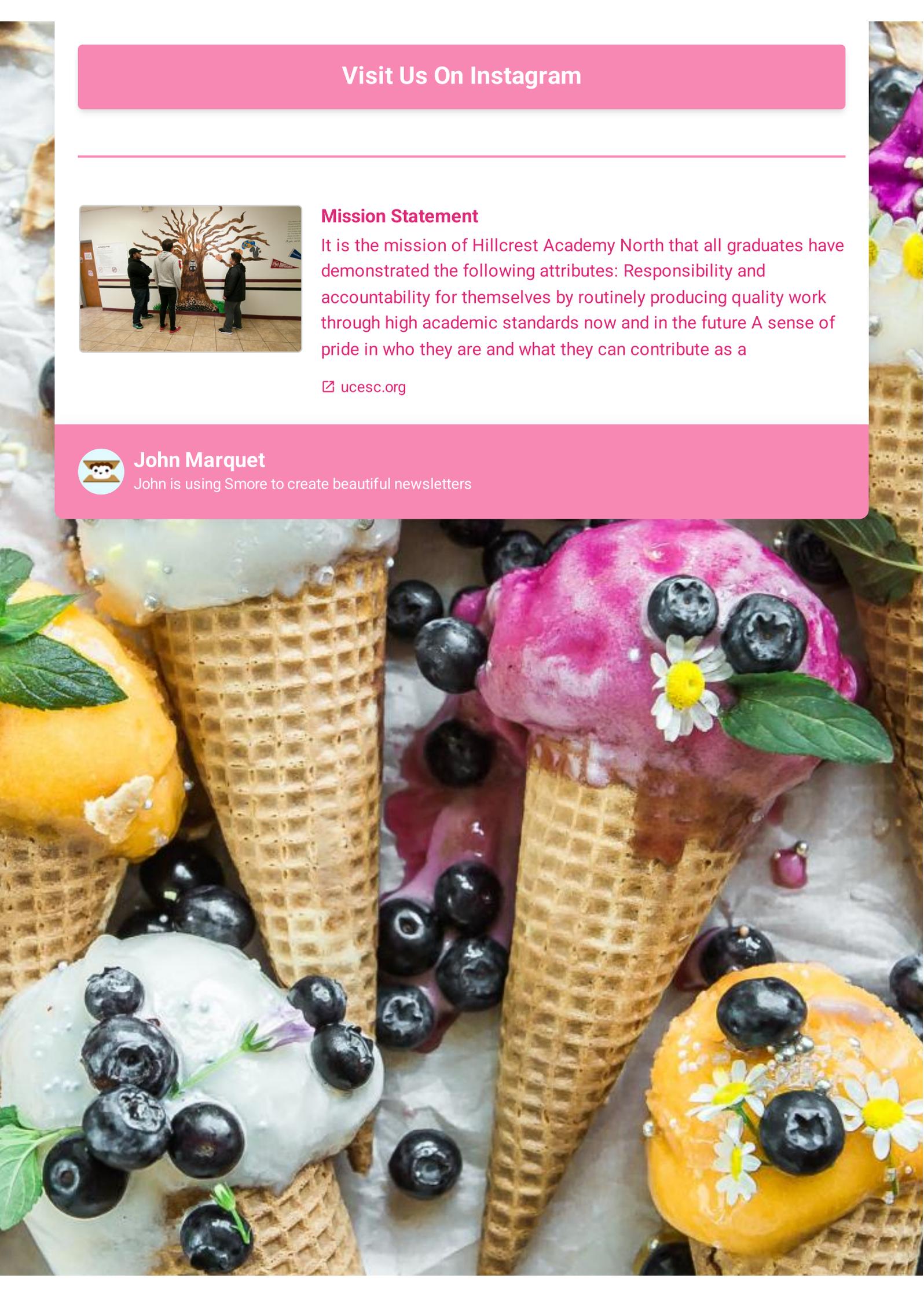
It is the mission of Hillcrest Academy North that all graduates have demonstrated the following attributes: Responsibility and accountability for themselves by routinely producing quality work through high academic standards now and in the future A sense of pride in who they are and what they can contribute as a

ucesc.org



John Marquet

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





WESTLAKE SEPTEMBER MONTHLY REPORT

Message from the Administrators

Welcome Back to School

Dear Westlake Families,

Welcome back to a brand-new school year! We hope you had a wonderful summer filled with rest, joy, and time with family and friends. We are excited to open our doors for the **2025–2026 school year** and look forward to the learning, growth, and memories ahead. ✨ Our Focus This Year is **to continue that all "voices" will be heard**. We will focus on building a supportive and inclusive school community, where every student feels safe, valued, and empowered to succeed.

Some highlights of the year ahead:

- **Student Success:** Continued focus on high-quality instruction and strong support systems for all learners.
- **Community Partnerships:** Building stronger connections with families through PTO events, volunteer opportunities, and open communication.
- **Wellness & Safety:** Prioritizing social-emotional learning, antibullying initiatives, and maintaining a safe, welcoming environment.

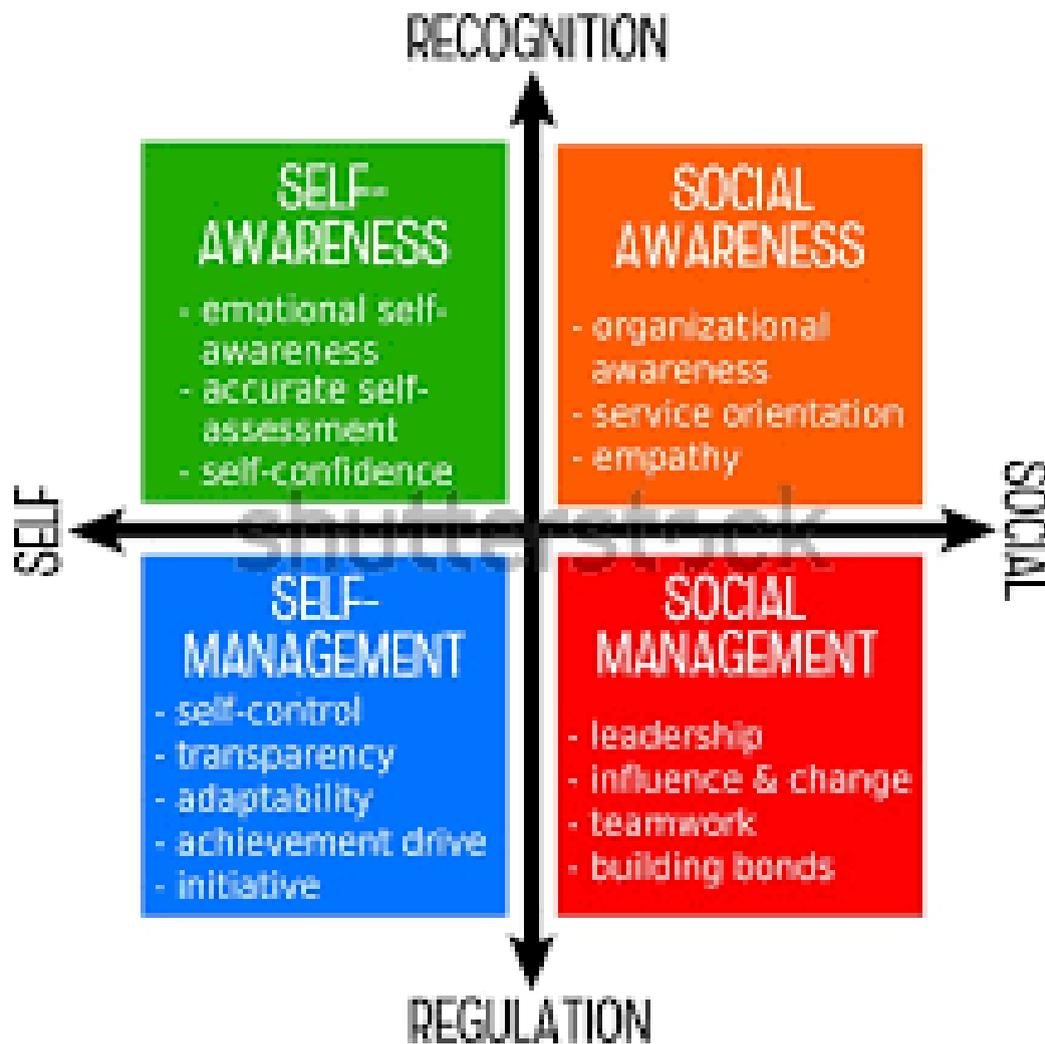
We are proud to welcome several new teachers and staff members to our Westlake family. Their enthusiasm and expertise will help strengthen our programs and provide new opportunities for students.

We believe that parents and guardians are essential partners in education. Here are a few ways to get involved:

- Join our **PTO** or attend an event.
- Stay connected through our **school website, newsletters, and social media updates.**
- Thank you for entrusting us with your children. Together, we can create a school community where every student feels inspired to learn and grow. Let's make this a year of **achievement, joy, and lasting memories.**

Warmly,

Claudine, Bobby and Stacey



www.shutterstock.com - 1327938609

Westlake Information

Enrollment: 55 students

Referrals: 6

Emergency Drill-Lockdown 9/16/25

Fire Drill: 9/9/25

Union County Educational Services Commission

September '25

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October '25

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November '25

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December '25

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January '26

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

2025-2026



District Calendar

- Sep 1 Labor Day
- Sep 2 - 4 Staff Development Day
- Sep 5 School Opens (Students & Staff)
- Sep 23 - 24 Rosh Hashanah
- Oct 2 Yom Kippur
- Oct 13 Early Dismissal (1pm)/Staff Development
- Nov 6 - 7 NJEA Convention
- Nov 26 Early Dismissal (1pm)
- Nov 27 - 28 Thanksgiving
- Dec 23 Early Dismissal (1pm)
- Dec 24 - Jan 2 Winter Recess
- Jan 12 Early Dismissal (1pm)/Staff Development
- Jan 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Feb 16 President's Day
- Mar 6 Staff Development Day
- Apr 3 - 10 Spring Recess
- May 11 Early Dismissal (1pm)/Staff Development
- May 25 Memorial Day
- Jun 19 - 23 Early Dismissal (1pm)
- Jun 23 Last Day of School

Total Days for Students: 180**
 Total Days for Staff: 184**

**Three emergency days are built into the calendar.
 Should extra days be needed they will be added at the end of the year.

If all emergency days are not used,
 the days will be reduced at the end of the year.

Emergency Closing Information

- First Day of School - Students
- School Closed - Holiday
- Early Dismissal
- School Closed - Staff Development

In the event of a delayed opening, all UCESC Schools and Programs will be delayed by 90 minutes.
 Delayed opening, early dismissal and school closing announcements will be posted online at www.ucesc.org and sent via the First Alert system.

February '26

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March '26

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April '26

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May '26

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June '26

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



September Spotlight!

Student of the Month!

K.C. is our September Student of the Month! He is new to Westlake after graduating from Crossroads in June. He has easily transitioned into our program!

Principal Award Winner!



Principal's Award



W.A. is our September Principal's Awards Winner. Everyday W.A. gets off the bus with a big smile!
He loves to be with his friends!

Staff of the Month!



Staff Member of the Month



Ms. A is our Staff of the Month! She is very helpful and encouraging to her 1:1 student!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!

SUNSHINE CAFE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



The Sunshine Cafe would like to announce our Employee of the Month for September... S.W.! We chose him because he comes to school everyday with a big smile and is always ready to work. He is a hard worker who is always respectful and looking to learn new things. We are so lucky to have him in the Sunshine Cafe!



S.W. celebrating with his Sunshine Cafe Co-Workers!



S.W. was so excited and surprised to hear his name called!



Westlake Appreciates Girl Scout Adalynn Olden for her donation!



Adalynn Olden, a dedicated Girl Scout, recently visited with the Westlake Administrators to share kindness and creativity with the students. She brought a variety of sensory toys and games, thoughtfully chosen to support students' needs while also making learning and playing more engaging. In addition to the sensory items, Adalynn wrote and illustrated a special book that highlighted different places for students to visit, complete with her own drawings. Her thoughtful book and the items she donated will be shared with all the students at Westlake, creating opportunities for joy, exploration, and inclusion throughout the school.

We were able to spend some time with Adalynn and her grandmother and learn a lot about the person, she is. Kind, compassionate, giving and a special girl who loves giving to others. Through speaking to Adalynn, we could tell she has strong family values and a strong willingness to help other people. A big thank you to Adalynn, the students and staff at Westlake appreciate you!



Sunshine Cafe!



The Cafe seats customers on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 am to 11:00 am. The Snack Shack is open to customers everyday from 12:15 PM to 1:00 PM.

On the opening day of the Sunshine Cafe, employees served over 100 customers! The customers were staff and students from Westlake School and Hillcrest Academy South. The most popular items ordered were the Brownies and the Shark Attack Slushie! Slushies drinks are a new addition that was introduced this summer! The Cafe was able to purchase TWO Ninja Slushie Drink Makers with profits from the Cafe.

Sunshine Cafe employees completed various roles in the Cafe, including Baristas, servers, plating, and cleaning tables. Each role contributes to a collaborative learning environment, offering students hands-on experience in business, teamwork, and communication.





Miss. Renzo's Gym Class

Hello! My name is Miss Renzo. I am your child's Health and Physical Education teacher at Westlake School. I am excited for the 2025-2026 school year! I am passionate about teaching physical, mental, and social well-being. I strive to create a positive and encouraging environment where your child can learn, thrive, and build lifelong skills through movement.

This month in Physical Education, we've been focusing on developing essential locomotor and non-locomotor movements. These fundamental skills—such as jumping, skipping, stretching, and twisting—are the building blocks for more complex movements in sports and everyday activities. It's been amazing to see the students' progress, and I'm so proud of all their hard work so far! Throughout the school year, we will be engaging in a variety of exciting sports, including basketball, bowling, and soccer, as well as tackling fun obstacle courses. These activities will not only enhance physical fitness but also encourage teamwork, communication, and perseverance.

This month in Health, we've been learning about the important community helpers who work to provide services and goods that support our everyday lives. From doctors and farmers to police officers, librarians, and hairstylists, the students are discovering how these professionals contribute to the well-being of our community. Looking ahead, we're excited to dive into topics like healthy habits, nutrition, mindfulness, and more! These lessons will help students develop the skills they need to take care of their bodies and minds, setting them up for a lifetime of healthy choices.



Ms. Dayna's Class

Welcome back to school! We're so excited to kick off another wonderful year at Westlake. In our class, our days are filled with learning, practicing important life skills, and building a strong classroom community where everyone has an important role.

Each month, we focus on a Social-Emotional Learning theme, and September's theme is Self-Awareness and Self-Management. We've been exploring the Zones of Regulation—a tool that helps us recognize our feelings and understand how our emotions influence our choices. Students have been practicing naming their emotions and sharing strategies to stay calm, focused, and ready to learn.

Alongside our classroom learning, students are also getting hands-on experience by working in the Card Shop and the Chocolate Shop. The Card Shop, where students design and assemble handmade greeting cards, is a returning project for our class. This year, we're also excited to take

on the Chocolate Shop, a long-standing Westlake tradition. Through both projects, students are building new skills while practicing teamwork, organization, and responsibility. From creating cards to filling chocolate orders, every student makes meaningful contributions—and we're excited to share our work with the school community throughout the year!

Ms. Schiumo's Class

It has been a busy start to the year! September was filled with activities that helped us get to know each other. Students and staff made collages about themselves which they proudly shared with the class. We also focused on important lessons about friendship and being a good citizen. Together we brainstormed ideas for making our classroom a positive welcoming place.

We also read The Survivor Tree written by Cheryl Somers Aubin, a 9/11 story about hope and resilience. Inspired by its message, students created a "Resilience Tree," where they attached words representing challenges and positive solutions and outcomes. This activity tied perfectly with our monthly theme of self-awareness.

In science, we learned about how an acorn grows through the stages of becoming a strong oak tree. As a follow up, we took a walk outside to look for acorns, oak trees and even signs that animals had been eating them. We also enjoyed a special visit from Ms. Salvatore who reviewed the Zones of Regulation. Since then, our class has been practicing recognizing our feelings and identifying concrete tools to manage them in healthy ways.

Westlake OT Department!

Dear Westlake Families,

Welcome back to a brand-new school year! We hope you and your children had a restful and enjoyable summer. As we step into the 2025–2026 school year, we are excited to continue supporting your child's growth and success through school-based Occupational Therapy (OT) services.

What is School-Based Occupational Therapy?

Occupational Therapy in the school setting focuses on helping students develop the skills they need to participate fully in their educational environment. This includes supporting areas such as:

- Fine motor skills (e.g., writing, cutting, manipulating school tools)
- Visual motor integration (e.g., hand-eye coordination)
- Sensory processing and self-regulation
- Functional school routines (e.g., organizing materials, managing transitions)
- Promoting independence in the classroom and beyond

Our goal is to help each student access their curriculum and school activities to the fullest by addressing any challenges that may impact their learning or participation.

We collaborate closely with teachers, support staff, and families to create an environment that nurtures every student's potential. Whether your child is continuing OT services or is new to our program this year, we are committed to making their experience both meaningful and motivating.

Looking Ahead

This year, we will continue working on individualized goals that support your child's academic and functional success. You may see us working with students in the classroom, in small groups, or one-on-one, depending on their specific needs. We believe in the power of collaboration and open communication, and we look forward to working together with you throughout the year.

If you have any questions about your child's OT services or would like to check in, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to support you and your child every step of the way.

Wishing everyone a joyful, productive, and inspiring school year!

The Westlake OT's,

Sara Rocha, Melissa Costa, & Sara Loesch



Behavior Department!

Dear Westlake Families,

Welcome to the 2025–2026 school year! We're excited to begin another year of learning and growth with your child. As students enter adolescence and young adulthood, it's more important than ever to provide consistent behavior supports that help them build independence, develop self-advocacy skills, and navigate the challenges of daily life.

At Westlake, our Behavior Team plays a key role in supporting students across academic, behavioral, and life-skills domains.

Meet the Westlake Behavior Team

Our school is proud to have:

- **2 Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs)** – These clinicians hold advanced degrees and specialize in designing individualized behavior programs based on data and student need.
- **6 Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs)** – RBTs work directly with students to implement strategies, collect behavior data, and support day-to-day progress. One serves as our Lead RBT, offering mentoring and advanced support schoolwide.
- **Supervisor of Behavior** – Oversees the behavior department and ensures services meet the unique needs of our students with autism, intellectual disabilities, and co-occurring mental health conditions.

What is ABA and How Does It Help?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a scientific approach to understanding behavior and learning.

At Westlake, ABA is used to:

- Support social and communication growth
- Promote independence in vocational, self-care, and life skills

- Reduce unsafe, disruptive, or interfering behaviors
- Help students express their needs and emotions more effectively

Key Concepts:

- **ABC:**
 - **Antecedent** – what happens before a behavior
 - **Behavior** – what the student does
 - **Consequence** – what followsThis model helps us understand the function (or purpose) of behavior and build effective interventions.
- **Reinforcement:** Positive outcomes that increase the likelihood of a behavior happening again –like giving break time, praise, or access to a favorite item or person when a student uses a coping strategy.
- **FBA (Functional Behavior Assessment):** A formal process to identify *why* a behavior is occurring—often because the student is trying to communicate something, avoid something, or gain access to something.
- **BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan):** A plan created from the FBA that teaches alternative behaviors and outlines specific strategies to support the student’s needs across settings.

Supporting Students AND Families

We know that raising a young person with complex needs comes with unique challenges. Our behavior team is here to be a partner for you, not just a school resource. We can:

- Help you understand behavior patterns and what might trigger them
- Collaborate on home-school consistency plans
- Offer ideas for communication tools, calming routines, or visual supports
- Connect you with resources for transition planning, community safety, or adult services

If your child is working on a behavior plan or social-emotional goal, we welcome your questions and input. We want to be sure families feel empowered and informed.

Let’s make this a year of growth, learning, and partnership. We’re here to help every step of the way.

With appreciation,

The Westlake Behavior Team



Wolf Pack Press! 🐺

Hello! We are the Wolf Pack Press. For any new staff or students, we'd like to tell you about what we do. In the Wolf Pack Press, we work together as a class to write about different topics or do a survey within the school. This month, we learned about the different Zones of Regulation using characters from Inside Out. We came up with different ways we can go from the Red Zone to the Green Zone, and here they are!

Taking a walk - Julian

Taking a big breath + Cooking while listening to music and dancing - Mohammed

Playing with my Nintendo Switch and building Legos - Samir

Watching TV + "Smell the flowers, blow out the candles" - Elijah

Walking outside with my cousin - Jasiyah

Playing on my phone - Liam

Listening to Bruno Mars - Soraya

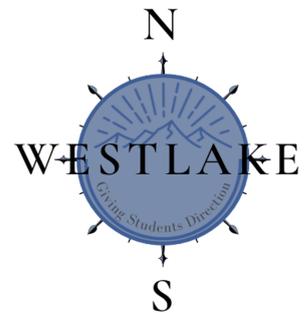
Parent Resource!

Contact Us!

Website: www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school

Location: [1571 Lamberts Mill Rd, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

Phone: [908-232-4181](tel:908-232-4181)



INSTAGRAM!

Visit us!





Robert Peneno

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





Crossroads Monthly Report

September 2025

Message from the Administration

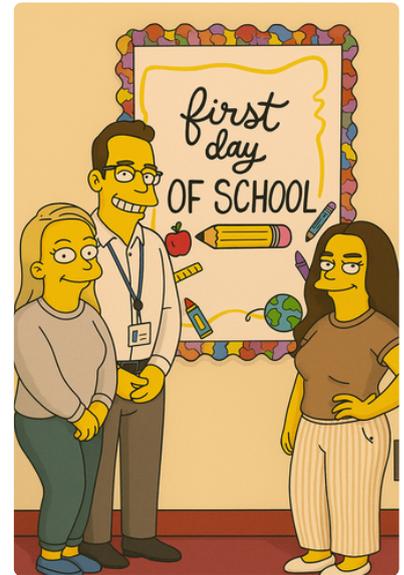
Dear Crossroads Community,

Welcome back to the 2025–2026 school year at Crossroads School! We are so excited to begin another year of learning, growth, and progress together. The first few weeks have already set a positive tone, and we look forward to all the successes ahead.

It was wonderful to see so many families at this year's Back to School Night. Your presence and partnership mean so much to us, and we genuinely value the time spent connecting with you. For those who could not attend, we look forward to welcoming you into the building soon.

We also want to extend our gratitude for your patience as the district transitioned to completing parent packet forms online this year through Genesis. While we know this change required some adjustment, we believe this initiative will make the process much smoother in the years to come. If you have not yet completed your forms and need assistance, please reach out to us in the main office at 908-232-6655. It is important that we receive completed forms for each student.

This year's district theme, "Paving Paths: One UCESC Voice at a Time," is all about celebrating the unique journey of every student, staff member, and family. Building on last year's theme of, "Let Every Voice Empower," we will continue to focus on ensuring that our students have a voice in their education and develop the skills and independence needed to create their own path forward.



We are excited to partner with you in making this year one of growth, achievement, and celebration of every step our students take. Thank you for your continued support and for being an essential part of our school community.

Warmly,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

General Information

Enrollment as of September 23, 2025

Actual: 57

Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0

Referrals: 6

Intakes Scheduled: 1

Accepted: 1

September Drill Schedule

Fire Drills: 9/10/25

Emergency Drills 9/16/25 (Lockdown)

Upcoming Dates

September 23-24, 2025 - School Closed - Rosh Hashanah

October 2, 2025 - School Closed for Students - Yom Kippur

October 6-10, 2025 - Week of Respect (Information to come)

October 13, 2025 - Student 1PM Dismissal (Staff Development Day)

October 16, 2025 - Parent Education/Support Meeting (1:00)

October 17, 2025 - Fire Prevention Month Fire Truck Visit (1:00PM)

October 28, 2025 - Crossroads Field Trip to Wightman Farms

October 31, 2025 - Halloween Activities (information to come)

Crossroads Student Spotlight

Student of the Month - Kayden

We are so proud to celebrate Kayden as our Student of the Month! Kayden brings life to our classroom each day--from his infectious laugh to his quick wit and adorable dance moves, there is never a dull moment. You will often see Kayden greeting friends and teachers in the hallways, helping Mr. Fernando with lunch for his class, or just pulling up a chair next to his teacher, eager to help or to just keep her company.

Kayden loves to participate in all group activities. He is a great helper each morning as he reads his friend's names and passes out their visuals for Morning Meeting. He always enjoys listening to a book and participating in the activity that follows, and is also always excited to get a turn at the keyboard with Mr. Pat, or to dance along with Ms. Dina in OT group. He is never afraid to try new things, he loves to go on class trips, color, cook, play with his favorite train set, and he makes more basketball shots in the motor room than his teachers!



As we enter our second year together, we are so proud of how far Kayden has come and are looking forward to all the fun adventures ahead!

Classroom Spotlight

Ms. Hannah's Classroom

The new school year is officially underway in Room 104, and we've hit the ground running! Our class is already hard at work establishing the routines and skills that will help us grow into independent learners.

The first few weeks of school are all about working on the fundamentals. We are focusing on everyday skills, such as practicing bathroom independence, eating lunch together as a group, and packing and unpacking our bookbags. These skills are the foundations of a successful school year, teaching our students responsibility and independence.

During our daily center time, students are developing social skills such as taking turns and sharing with their peers. This cooperative play helps them practice their skills and build strong friendships. We've been so impressed by everyone's hard work and enthusiasm! We are looking forward to a wonderful school year and everything to come.





Therapist Report - Aliza Feuerstein - PT, DPT

The students at Crossroads School are off to a great start in PT this month! Each student is actively working towards their individual IEP goals relating to gross motor skills, strength, balance and mobility.

We are taking full advantage of the nice weather and utilizing the playground as part of our therapy sessions. This has allowed the students to practice and strengthen important functional playground skills, including balance, stair negotiation, climbing, and motor planning. These activities not only address therapeutic goals but also encourage social interaction and independence during recess time.

Obstacle courses are a favorite PT activity and they allow us to work on many skills at once. Our students are enjoying using equipment such as the balance beam, balance stones, BOSU ball, hurdles and aerobic steps to construct creative obstacle courses and activities.

Overall, September has been a strong beginning to the school year. The students are adjusting well and showing steady progress toward their individualized PT goals.





Specials Report - Behavior Team

Dear Crossroads Families,

Welcome back to school! We are excited to introduce our dedicated behavior team consisting of two behavior specialists, one lead registered behavior technician, and five registered behavior technicians (RBTs). Our RBTs will be dividing their time between classrooms to assist with behavior needs as well as conduct skill assessments.

We started our school year with a fun and busy month:



- **New Team Members:** We are thrilled to welcome two new Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) to our team: Daniel Figueroa and Samantha Roytman. Their expertise will be a great asset to our program.
- **Crisis Management Training:** A big thank you to Jen and Karly for re-certifying all of our staff on crisis management and prevention. This training ensures we are well-prepared to support our students.

- Classroom Transitions: Our team has been busy helping students adjust to their new classrooms. We are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible.
- Behavior Binders: We have prepared behavior binders for each classroom, allowing staff to easily access effective behavior strategies tailored to our students' needs.

As we embark on another exciting school year, we want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing support and partnership. We are grateful for your continued partnership and support. Your involvement is invaluable to us and greatly enhances our students' learning experiences. Thank you for being an essential part of our community!

September at Crossroads







Crossroads Back to School Night 2025



Parent Resources

Crossroads Behavior Team

Who's on the Behavior Team at Crossroads?

Our team includes:

- **2 Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs)** – These are master's-level clinicians who are trained in the science of behavior. BCBAs assess student needs, design individualized behavior plans, and support classroom teams.
- **6 Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs)** – RBTs are certified staff trained to implement behavior plans, collect data, and work directly with students on their goals. One RBT serves as our Lead RBT, with advanced training to support programs schoolwide.
- **Supervisor of Behavior** – Oversees all behavior supports across programs, provides training, and ensures high-quality, consistent services.

What is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?

ABA is the science of learning and behavior. It helps us understand *why* a behavior is happening and how to teach meaningful skills. At Crossroads, ABA strategies are used to support communication, independence, play, and safety.

Here are some helpful terms to know:

- **ABC:** This is how we understand behavior.
 - **Antecedent** – what happens right before a behavior
 - **Behavior** – what the person does
 - **Consequence** – what happens right after

Understanding the ABCs helps us figure out what the behavior means and how to support change.

- **Reinforcement:** A reward or outcome that makes a behavior more likely to happen again. For example, giving praise or access to a favorite toy when a student uses words or their device to ask instead of grabbing.
- **FBA (Functional Behavior Assessment):** A process BCBA's use to understand why a behavior is happening and what the student is trying to communicate through their behavior. Understanding *why* a behavior is happening helps us to better plan for teaching an alternative skill.
- **BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan):** A personalized plan based on the FBA that outlines how we will teach new skills and reduce unsafe or disruptive behaviors.

How Can the Behavior Team Support Families?

We're here to work with you, not just during school hours, but to offer ideas and tools that can be used at home. We can:

- Provide visuals, token boards, or routines that work at school and could work at home
- Offer strategies for transitions, new environments, or challenging behaviors
- Help you understand how your child communicates through their behavior at school

If you ever have a question about your child's behavior plan, progress, or supports, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher or directly to our team.

We're excited to partner with you this year to help every student grow, learn, and thrive!

About Us

Website: https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads_school

Location: [45 Cardinal Drive, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

Phone: [908-233-9317](tel:908-233-9317)

[Visit us on Instagram](#)



CR Smore

CR is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



Work Readiness Academy

September 2025 Monthly Report

Message from the Director



Wake Me Up When September (Begins)

Dear Families & Supporters,

Welcome back to a new school year! As the crisp fall air begins to settle in, we are excited to embrace a season full of learning, growth, and new opportunities. There are many new faces this year as we are excited to welcome eight new students to the Work Readiness Academy, six new students to our Project SEARCH program, and 4 new staff members!

News, Notes & Reminders

- We encourage all of our families to join us for our Back to School Night sessions coming up next month; **WRA BTS Night** will be held on **Tuesday, October 7th from 6:30-8:30pm (in person)**; **Project SEARCH BTS Night** is scheduled for **Wednesday October 15th from 7:00-8:15pm (virtual)**.
- If you believe your family may qualify for **reduced priced or free school meals**, please make sure to return a reduced priced meals application ASAP. Students who qualified last year will only continue to receive the same benefits until September 30th, unless we receive a new application. Please contact dblajsa@ucesc.org if you have any questions or need a new application.
- **Student Work-Based Learning Experiences** for students at the Work Readiness Academy are tentatively scheduled to begin the weeks of October 6th and October 13th. We will be sending home information about your child's placements next week.
- Ms. Nicole DellaVecchia, our program Social Worker, has left to pursue other professional opportunities. We wish Nicole all the best and thank her for her service the past two years. We are currently interviewing candidates and hope to have someone in the position by the end of October.

- We are thrilled to announce that we are piloting a **new partnership with Downtown Westfield this school year** with Work-Based Learning experiences planned with Terrace Plant Shop and Ono Bowls!

We look forward to supporting our students as they build new skills, develop their strengths, and reach new milestones. Together, let's make this a year of meaningful progress and positive experiences for every learner.

My sincere thanks to **Kiya** for sharing a selfie with me during our annual ESY trek Jersey City and the famous Torico's Ice Cream 🍦

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter and here's to a fantastic school year ahead!

Josh Bornstein, Director
UCESC Work Readiness Academy
jbornstein@ucesc.org

Instructional Insights

Welcome Back!

We are so excited to begin a new school year together at the Work Readiness Academy! The start of the year brings new energy, anticipation, and endless possibilities for our students as they take important steps toward their futures. To build a strong foundation, we began the year focusing on the themes of *determining your path, building self-awareness, and speaking up for yourself.*



Through fun and meaningful activities, students created vision boards and bucket lists to imagine their futures, practiced goal setting to turn their dreams into action steps, and completed self-assessments to learn more about their strengths and preferences. These lessons are helping students gain confidence, manage themselves with independence, and advocate for what they need. It has been wonderful to see their excitement and growth as we set the stage for a successful school year ahead!

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." – Eleanor Roosevelt

Rachel Richer, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction

September 2025 Data

Enrollment as of September 30, 2025

Actual: 28

Changes: Entered: 1 Exited: 0

Referrals: 1

Intakes Scheduled: 1

Accepted: 1



Drills

9/8/25 - Fire Drill

9/16/25 - Lockdown Drill



Attendance Reporting

In the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, please send us an email at AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org. You may also call our main number at (908) 633-2704. If it is

before 8am, please leave a message.



Trina Shepard

Part-Time Teaching Assistant, WRA



Lori Talbot

Part-Time Teaching Assistant, WRA



Menka Panjwan

Part-Time Teaching Assistant, WRA



Lauren Vernick

Full-Time Teaching Assistant, Project SEARCH



.....

Welcome to a New Year, Some New Faces and Bright Futures Ahead!

WRA Students of the Month!

The WRA is thrilled to welcome and celebrate our eight new students, **Jonathan, Tina, Sean, Chelsea, John, Ariana, Christian, and Giselle**, as our September Students of the Month! Each of them is being recognized for the positive energy they bring to the Work Readiness Academy. From their willingness to engage in classroom and community activities, to their open-mindedness and hard work in getting to know our staff and peers, these students have made an outstanding start to the school year. Their easy transition into our program and their positive attitudes set a wonderful example for others, and we are so proud to have them as part of our Work Readiness Academy family!

.....

Our Students Are Ready to Begin Their Journey

Staff Spotlight



Diane Blajsa

Current position at UCESC?

I am the secretary at Work Readiness Academy.

How long have you worked at UCESC?

I am starting my second school year at WRA; but I previously worked for the Commission in the Transportation Department and as a receptionist at the Central Office!

What do you love most about your job?

I love welcoming back our returning students and getting to know our new students. This program is amazing, and I'm lucky to work with such a great staff.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I like to spend time with my family.

What is one thing that would surprise people about you?

I'm a huge Springsteen fan!

WRA Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

"Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness." - Ola Joseph

This month at WRA, our students proudly celebrated Hispanic Heritage with a vibrant day of Latin culture! Leading up to the event, students researched musicians, traditional dances, and both sweet and savory recipes from across Latin America. They worked together to shop for

ingredients, prepare delicious dishes, and create festive playlists to share with the school community and district guests. The celebration was filled with music, food, and learning, an opportunity for students to showcase their creativity, teamwork, and pride while honoring the rich traditions of Hispanic culture.



Family Education Workshop

Our first Family Education Workshop of the year, "**Navigating the DDD System**" was held virtually on September 18th. Ms. Marie Durand-Turner, a Transition to Adult Life & Employment Specialist with the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), was our guest presenter. If your family has not yet applied for Medicaid for your child (either via securing Supplemental Security Income benefits or by applying to NJ Medicaid) AND DDD, we strongly encourage you to do so, as soon as possible. The handouts from the session held on 9/18 are attached below. Please feel free to reach out to Josh Bornstein, if you have any questions or need support with applying for Medicaid and/or DDD.



Family Quick Guide to DDD_English

Download
3.0 MB



Family Quick Guide to DDD_Spanish (Español)

Download
2.1 MB



Full DDD Application-for-Eligibility-English

Download
3.6 MB



Full DDD Application-for-Eligibility-Spanish (Español)

Download
8.2 MB



Look Who Was Spotted in the Community!

Former WRA Student, **Penelope**, has been volunteering as a Greeter at Overlook Medical Center, Union.

Picture of the Month

Jonathan and Steven agree... "When you look up, the possibilities are endless!"

Community Resources/Events

Union County Office for Persons with Disabilities & Special Needs (OPDSN)

The Office for Persons with Disabilities & Special Needs offers a range of social and recreational opportunities to help individuals with disabilities connect with others and engage in meaningful activities.

The **#2NDFLOOR app** for NJ youth is here! It only takes a second to get free 24/7 mental health support with one-on-one chat, helpline, community conversations, and more.

2NDFLOOR is a confidential and anonymous support network for New Jersey's youth. We are here to help you find solutions to the problems that you face at home, at school or at play.

Get started at 2NDFLOOR.org/download #mentalhealth #support.

Understanding Supported Employment Options Available AFTER Graduation



Supported Employment Fact Sheet Final.pdf

Click the link to download the attachment

Download

641.9 KB

Guardianship Resources

At 18 years old all individuals, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, reach the legal age of majority. This means that parents can no longer make decisions legally on behalf of their children. See the attached fact sheet from the Arc of New Jersey for more information about Guardianship and various alternative options.



Updated Guardianship Fact Sheet (3).pdf

Download

107.0 KB



About the Work Readiness Academy

The Work Readiness Academy serves students ages 18-21 with disabilities and provides a comprehensive employment training experience that incorporates both classroom-based instruction and community-based work-learning experiences. While in the training classroom, students work cooperatively with similar aged peers to learn critical skills related to employment and socialization. Students also work on career exploration and planning, including the development of a person-centered, post-secondary vision and plan with clear goals and action steps. Program staff remain on-site during the internships to provide and fade support and assistance as needed. Students also participate in field trips focused on career discovery, independent living skills, recreation and independent travel training.

For more information or to make a student referral, please email Rachel Richer at rreicher@ucesc.org

Email: jbornstein@ucesc.org

Website: https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the_work_readiness_academy

Location: [970 Suburban Road, Union, NJ, USA](#)

Phone: [908-633-2704](tel:908-633-2704)



Click Here to Follow the
WRA on Instagram!



WRA Smore

WRA is using S'more to create beautiful newsletters

